

WHEN manager Brian Lee was recorded on television and radio as giving Wycombe Wanderers no chance whatsoever of beating Middlesbrough in the third round of the F.A. Cup, there must have been many who were surprised to hear his words.

They probably expected something like: "We're in with a chance," or "You never know in cup games."

Brian Lee did not even contemplate such thoughts. He has such a respect for the world of professional football and an equally high regard for Boro manager Jack Charlton, that he sincerely believes his players cannot beat Middlesbrough.

And coming from a man who has brought Wycombe Wanderers more trophies, championships, respect and general success than any other manager in the club's history, one has to heed his words.

Brian took over as Wycombe's boss in 1969. At the time it is fair to say Wanderers were an above-average Isthmian League club. Lee changed them into a great one. In his first season the club finished league runners up. They won it the following year, retained it in 1972 and also reached the Amateur Cup, semi-final.

In '73 the Blues finished fourth in the league, but won the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup. Last season they won the County Cup, the first ever Rothmans Isthmian League title and Lee also steered them into the second round of the F.A. Cup, beating Newport 3-1 on the way. And this year? This time, he has written a new chapter in Wycombe Wanderers' history by reaching the third round.

The secret of much of Brian's success stems from coaching. A fully qualified F.A. coach, he first attended coaching courses in 1954. Before that Brian, born in Sale, Cheshire, in 1936, had met with a good deal of success as a schoolboy sportsman. He won district soccer honours and when joining a rugby school, Sale G.S., he won a place in the First XV as a fly half or centre, again playing in the county schools team.

During that time, however, he badly dislocated his elbow and a few years later, when playing soccer in the gym, he broke a toe which turned arthritic. That virtually ended any hopes Brian had fostered of full time sport. He turned his attentions to coaching.

After attending courses at Manchester he spent weekends at Lilleshall and passed his preliminary coaching exam at the age of 18. He then studied at Shoreditch College to train as a teacher in handicrafts — his other great love. An accomplished wood and metal worker, Brian moved from Shoreditch to Bishop Vesey's G.S. in Sutton Coldfield and then on to the Holt School, Norfolk, where he was appointed deputy headmaster after three years. At both schools he was busy with the physical education.



Honesty is Lee's key to success

By STUART EARP
Bucks Free Press Sports Editor

In 1960, Brian joined the staff at Lilleshall, leaving behind him the teaching profession. He joined as the deputy director. After seven years, he moved on to the National Sports Centre, Bisham Abbey, in 1967, where he has been ever since.

His childhood injuries have not robbed him of a full sporting life. Squash, cricket and golf are three of his other favourite sports. An 18 handicap golfer, he also played a game for Cheshire in a Minor County championship "warm-up" match, keeping wicket.

When Brian Lee decided to take on the job as manager of Wycombe Wanderers, he brought with him fresh ideals which he soon implemented. The reserve team was axed and new players gradually began to join the club, players Lee himself wanted. At the time and still now he says: "My basic principles in football are honesty and sincerity. I share the

ideals of the Rothmans sponsorship — attacking football and sportsmanship."

Two men he most admires are former West Ham boss Ron Greenwood, a personal friend, and Walter Winterbottom. Included with these two is Jack Charlton, who he describes as "a credit to the game and one of the rare breed of managers who doesn't manage by the checkbook."

But what of Wycombe's success?

"To succeed, you need to find the right kind of people," he says. "We all spend a lot of time together training, travelling and playing. It is so important we all get along together. The players have got to believe in me and mutual respect is essential. Above all, you must be honest to succeed."

Lee's triumphs at Wycombe, and also the success he achieved when Wellington's (now Telford United's) boss earlier in his

career, has inevitably brought him offers from professional clubs. But Brian says: "I'll admit it is a great temptation to go pro' but I enjoy my football at the moment and I also enjoy my life at Bisham. I've been lucky at Wycombe but you have to work hard to get what you deserve."

Brian, who was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1971, has strong views on professional soccer's current trends and feels much of the football world reflects on present day society. "We have problems in society today which affects the game. I would like to see greater honesty all round."

But back to tomorrow's match with Middlesbrough. Does he still firmly believe his team has no chance?

There's still no persuading the manager. And if somehow the Blues do pull off a footballing miracle tomorrow, I honestly believe the most surprised man of them all will be Brian Lee.